

The University of Chicago

THE POETIC THEORY
OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND
LITERATURE
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That Hopkins was both a priest and a poet has led many critics to investigate what appears to them as a problem of reconciling two incompatible modes of life. At least some of these studies have concluded that Hopkins' diversified activities were not conflicting but actually complementary. A number of writers have viewed his poems in the light of their religious significance; however, no systematic attempt has been made to consider Hopkins' poetic theory in relation to his professed beliefs. Yet a study of that theory reveals a conception of poetry founded on an essentially Christian view of art.

Like many other literary theorists, Hopkins considered the relation between art and nature; but, while some of his statements on this subject may sound similar to those made by other men, his treatment of the problem is peculiar to his whole theory, and he derives consequences from his conception of this relation that would hardly be logical in any other system. In an address based on the opening of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius, Hopkins discusses both nature and art in terms of creation. The natural world, he notes, was created by God out of nothing and, as God created everything that is besides Himself, it follows that man can create nothing.

But MEN OF GENIUS ARE SAID TO CREATE, a painting, a poem, a tale, a tune, a policy; not indeed the colours and the canvas, not the words or notes, but the design, the character, the air, the plan. How then? — from themselves, from their own minds. And they themselves, their minds and all, are creatures of God: if the tree created much more the flower and the fruit.¹

¹*Note-Books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Humphrey House (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 301. Hereafter referred to as *Note-Books*.

Thus men are merely "said to" create; for their activity resembles that of God, the only true Creator, but is not identical with His. Therefore, human creation may be called such only by analogy. Unlike the Deity, man does not create from nothing; he must act upon materials which exist independently, to which he gives form though it too derives from God.

As this is the case, a problem arises in respect to the activity of human creation which has no bearing upon the divine. Because the artist creates a design, character, air, or plan from materials not of his own making, man is faced with the problem of finding the proper manner of dealing with his materials. One possible solution might involve the setting up of criteria for the selection of certain types of subject matters suitable for art. But Hopkins never defines any set objects for artistic treatment. Rather, he turns to the nature of the human creator himself who should be capable of seeing any object of God's creation in such a manner that it becomes suitable as an art object. It is notable that Hopkins writes that "men of genius" are said to create, for the term "genius" indicates first, that not all men are capable of artistic creation; and second, that the power requisite for this activity is natural and not artificial. His consideration of artistic creation, therefore, is based upon his conception of the power of the artist, and — because the value of art becomes dependent upon the nature of its creator — Hopkins defines the standard of art in terms of qualities proper to the artist.

Throughout his remarks on art, Hopkins makes reference to the way in which the artist should view his object. He defines this attitude as one of seriousness when he writes Robert Bridges that "a kind of touchstone of the highest or most living art is seriousness; not gravity but the being in earnest with your subject — reality."² This statement actually involves two concepts: one concerning the artist and the other relating to the nature of his materials. While the agent is free to deal with any subject he wishes, he is, nevertheless, to direct his attention to the "reality" of his matter. Rather than looking to the appearance of things, Hopkins expects the artist to see beyond them, to perceive that significance which can be known only when an object is viewed in

²*Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, ed. Claude Collier Abbott (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 225. Hereafter referred to as *Letters*.

relation to God who gives it being or reality. The artist must deal with truth.³ When Hopkins writes of Swinburne's genius as functioning "without truth, feeling, or any adequate matter to be at function on,"⁴ he refers not to the mere subject matter of Swinburne's poems but rather to what that poet was incapable of seeing in his subject—that which gives it reality. Hopkins could, in fact, explain exactly what Swinburne lacked; for the kind of perception requisite for the artist assumes a penetration possible only to the Christian mind. As, in Hopkins' terms, God is the Maker of all things and He alone gives them being, a perception of reality is equivalent to a recognition of God as Creator. For this reason, it is the man who is capable of this religious insight who is potentially the greatest artist.

This intimate relation between the capacity of the artist and the adequacy of his subject matter is dependent upon Hopkins' analogy between natural and artistic creation. Although the artist, unlike God, works with materials not of his own creation, his attributes, like those of God, are reflected in his work: and so his insight into reality, as exhibited in his product, gives evidence of the character of the artist just as the qualities to be perceived in natural objects give evidence of their Creator.⁵ The man who perceives reality sees more than appearances, for he apprehends the participation of all creatures in the qualities of God, and this insight is a mark of his character. Insofar as he has this knowledge, the artist is then himself participating in a divine attribute—that of understanding. In this sense of participation only does the artist have character. As men "themselves, their minds and all, are creatures of God," they can reflect the qualities of their

³"This poem will assuredly be prized even in such a volume; yet it troubles me, for it seems to me perverse and founded on an unreality. For first, taking all quite in earnest, as we must, we must know that the blessed *cannot* mar their bliss by any grief, so that no promise is needed. . . . We must take your poem then as the lovely expression of an overstrained mood and, what is so common, an insight coupled with an oversight." *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins: including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore*, ed. Claude Collier Abbott (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), pp. 193-94. Hereafter referred to as *Further Letters*. "I did find one fault with it [Bridges' 'Ulysses'] which seems to me indeed to be the worst fault a thing can have, unreality. . . . Believe me, the Greek gods are totally unworkable material; the merest frigidity, which must chill and kill every living work of art they are brought into." *Letters*, pp. 216-17.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 304.

⁵"I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it." *Note-Books*, pp. 133-34.

Creator. Accordingly, the reflection of the qualities of God in nature, or in the soul of the artist, or in the work of art, may be termed "inscape" and may be perceived by the artist in nature⁶ or by the observer in the work of art.⁷ Thus, "inscape" in a poem, for example, may be identified with design, character, or style — that which is "created" by the artist⁸ and which reflects his power to perceive "inscape" in his object.

But while insight is a necessary preliminary to the creation of a work of art; the making itself is, of course, an activity; and Hopkins considers it as such. His conception of the identity of purpose in all human creation⁹ led him to be more concerned with the manner in which the artist serves God than with his development of specific technical skills. Because the context of this poetic theory is found in the nature of the artist, Hopkins' statements

⁶The perception of "inscape" in nature depends on the capacity of the observer. "The chestnuts down by St. Joseph's were a beautiful sight. . . . When the wind tossed them they plunged and crossed one another without losing their inscape. (Observe that motion multiplies inscape only when inscape is discovered, otherwise it disfigures.)" *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁷In a painting, for example: "Intense expression of face, expression of character, not mood, true inscape — I think it could hardly be exceeded." *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁸" . . . what I call *inscape*, that is species or individually-distinctive beauty of style." *Further Letters*, p. 225; " . . . it is the virtue of design, pattern, or inscape to be distinctive. . . ." *Letters*, p. 66.

Austin Warren has defined "inscape" as "any kind of formed or focussed view, any pattern discerned in the natural world . . . an 'inscape' is not mechanically or inertly present, but requires personal action, attention, a seeing and *seeing into*." *Gerard Manley Hopkins by the Kenyon Critics* (Norfolk: New Directions, 1945), pp. 76-77. Hereafter referred to as *Kenyon Critics*. But "inscape" is not a "view"; it is the perceivable reflection of the creator in his product, whether natural or artificial, whether or not the observer does actually perceive it. Hopkins is always more concerned about man's duty of seeing the "inscape" of God's creations than about the existence of that "inscape." Cf. "I thought how sadly the beauty of inscape was unknown and buried away from simple people and yet how near at hand it was if they had eyes to see it and it could be called out everywhere again." *Note-Books*, p. 161.

W. H. Gardner notes that "inscape" is an "insight by Divine grace, into the ultimate spiritual reality." *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1944), p. 27. But Gardner quotes in support of his definition Hopkins' statement that "whenever I took in an inscape of the sky or sea I thought of Scotus." Surely "inscape" here refers to something which exists but which man may or may not perceive. As such it is the object of man's insight — "the ultimate spiritual reality" — but not the act of insight which perceives that reality. Hopkins uses the term "instress" to denote an impression of "inscape." "I saw the inscape though freshly, as if my eye were still growing, though with a companion the eye and ear are for the most part shut and instress cannot come." *Note-Books*, p. 171.

⁹" . . . God [has] a purpose, an end, a meaning in his work. He meant the world to give him praise, reverence and service; to give him glory. . . . Man was created. Like the rest then to praise, reverence, and serve God; to give him glory." *Ibid.*, pp. 302-3.

about the limitations of human activity, of which creation is one type, become relevant to an exposition of his ideas on art. Thus, remarks drawn from his theological writings may have bearing on his conception of the nature of the artist whose natural powers are simply greater than those of other men. Although, Hopkins argues, man's creative power (like any other of his powers) is the result of a natural capacity, neither the possession nor the exercise of that capacity are entirely dependent upon man himself — they are the result of God's grace. Thus, the human is differentiated from the divine Creator not only by his use of already existent materials but also by his dependence upon another agent as a condition of his power to act.¹⁰ In his comments on the *Spiritual Exercises*, he notes that grace is a shift by which God moves man so that he consents to God's will and wishes to be and to do only that which God wishes.¹¹ It is only by such "correspondence" to God that man is capable of creation in a sense analogous to that of the creation effected by the Deity. Insofar as man conforms, relinquishes all claim to his human capacities and desires,¹² he becomes like Christ,¹³ the model whom all men should aim to follow. Yet, Hopkins urges, this conformity does not destroy the individuality of man but rather develops it, for correspondence "best brings out the nature of man himself, as the letter on a sail or device upon a flag are best seen when it fills."¹⁴

¹⁰Cf. "You are not like an artist; for he forms one body from another as his mind chooses; his mind has the power to give external existence to the form it perceives within itself by its inner eye — and whence should it have that power unless You made it? It impresses that form upon a material already existent and having the capacity to be thus formed, such as clay or stone or wood or gold or such like. And how should these things have come to be unless You had made them to be? It was You who made the workman his body, and the mind that directs his limbs, the matter of which he makes what he makes, the intelligence by which he masters his art and sees inwardly what he is to produce exteriorly, the bodily sense by which he translates what he does from his mind to his material, and then informs the mind of the result of his workmanship, so that the mind may judge by the truth which presides within it whether the work is well done." Augustine *Confessions*. xi. 5.

¹¹Note-Books, p. 332.

¹²"For grace is any action, activity, on God's part by which in creating or after creating he carries the creature to or toward the end of its being, which is its self sacrifice to God and its salvation." *Ibid*.

¹³"... so that so far as this action or activity is God's it is divine stress, holy spirit; and as all is done through Christ, Christ's spirit, so far as it is action, correspondence, on the creature's it is *actio salutaris*; so far as it is looked at *in esso quieto* it is Christ in his member on the one side, his member in Christ on the other." *Ibid*.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 343. Cf. "And yet it is the holiest that shows his freedom most . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 336.

This resulting individuality is achieved because, in Hopkins' terms, man does not receive grace passively; he may either refuse it or consent to it.¹⁵ This activity is free, because it is of the will.¹⁶ The greatest freedom, however, is not of choice between alternatives but of what Hopkins calls "pitch" or emphasis. This delimitation of the meaning of freedom qualifies the activity of the artist as Hopkins explains it in "On a Piece of Music":

Not free in this because
His powers seemed free to play:
He swept what scope he was
To sweep and must obey.

The argument is not that the artist lacks freedom of the will¹⁷ but that such freedom does not consist in a choice between alternatives. The artist is not free to express a character other than his own, but he is free to stress, to make positive, the expression of his mind. Although the direction of the will may be determined by God, whose grace affects man in favor of the right objectives, the stress is not constrained by any power outside man, and the artist is certainly responsible for the intensification — the actualizing of the will. Freedom consists in the distinctive pitch of the will. This pitch or positiveness is, then, actual and not merely possible,¹⁸ and it is actual by virtue of its distinctiveness. This last conclusion is explained by Hopkins' identifying the positiveness of the will with Scotus' *ecceitas*,¹⁹ the individualizing form by which each actual thing differs from any other.²⁰ Thus, when man

¹⁵"Ordinarily when grace is given we feel first the necessity or constrained act and after that the free act on our own part, of consent or refusal as the case may be." *Ibid.*, pp. 225-26.

¹⁶"... where there is will it is free action, moral action." *Ibid.*, p. 328.

¹⁷Robert Bridges interpreted: "The fragment, on a piece of music, No. 67, is the draft of what appears to be an attempt to explain how an artist has not free-will in his creation. He works out his own nature instinctively as he happens to be made, and is irresponsible for the result." *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Robert Bridges (2d ed., London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 99. Hereafter referred to as *Poems*.

¹⁸"So also *pitch* is ultimately simple positiveness, that by which being differs from and is more than nothing and not being . . ." *Note-Books*, p. 328.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Duns Scotus claims that a substance is individual through some positive entity. *Opus Oxoniense*. Bk. II. dist. 3. q.6.n.9. As one cannot divide genus into further genera, nor species into further species, so the individual cannot be divided into further individuals, and this last is the ultimate distinction. *Ibid.*, n.11. The individual entity from which the individual difference comes is the ultimate reality of the being, which is not matter to anything else (as, for instance, genus is the matter of species) except to existence. It is form which determines the matter, form, and composite of the substance. *Ibid.*, n. 15.

wills to conform his actions to those determined by God as right, he asserts his own freedom; and it is by virtue of this freedom — which man possesses above all other beings — that he is the most distinctive, the most individual of all earthly creatures.²¹

Because the character of the artist is constituted of seeming contraries: conformity and individuality; these same two qualities will appear in the work of art, which is a reflection of its creator. By conforming to the divine order, the artist realizes his own individualizing form; by the insight made possible by such conformity, he perceives form in the things about him and may realize that form artistically by representing it in his product. The object created then mirrors the insight of its maker. The genius that is thus reflected is "beauty and perfection in the mind,"²² for it is the genius that creates the work of art. This reflection is possible because of Hopkins' analogizing of art and nature in regard not only to the process of creation but also to the finished product itself. Thus, as Hopkins finds three levels of beauty in man — that of the body, that of the mind ("such as genius"), and that of character —²³ he finds three analogous levels of poetic language.²⁴

The first and highest is poetry proper, the language of inspiration. . . . The second kind I call *Parnassian*. It can only be spoken by poets, but is not in the highest sense poetry. It does not require the mood of mind in which the poetry of inspiration is written. It is spoken *on and from the level of a poet's mind*, not as in the other case, when the inspiration which is the gift of genius, raises him above himself. For I think it is the case with genius that it is not when quiescent so very much above mediocrity as the difference between the two might lead one to think, but that it has the power and privilege of rising from that level to a height utterly far from mediocrity; in other words that its greatness is *that it can be* so great. . . . In a poet's particular Parnassian lies most of his style, of his manner, of his mannerisms if you like. . . . The third kind is merely the language of verse as distinct from that of prose.²⁵

The parallel between the two hierarchies is indicative of the relation between the artist and his work. The manner in which the lowest level is defined is significant by its lack of mention of the role of the artist, for the genius of the creator plays an important

²¹" . . . human nature, being more highly pitched, selved, and distinctive than anything else in the world . . ." *Note-Books*, p. 309.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 263.

²³*Letters*, p. 95. Cf. *Note-Books*, pp. 261-65 where the same three levels are attributed to Christ.

²⁴Although the passage has specific reference to the art of poetry, Hopkins' system, as it is based upon the nature of man rather than on the nature of one species of art, is sufficiently broad in its context that any statements about one particular art may be translated into the terms of any other.

²⁵*Further Letters*, pp. 69-71.

part in the creation of the highest art. The second level, on the other hand, is too obviously permeated by the personality of the man. Hopkins has defined the attitude of the artist towards his materials in terms of two complementary factors—individuality and correspondence, and neither of these two aspects can exist without the other. Parnassian poetry, therefore, exhibits not real but only apparent individuality. The language of inspiration, however exhibits true distinctiveness, because the poet is raised “above himself.”

The three levels of art are defined in terms of the artist and differentiated by the degree of form realized by him. The one element that man “creates” is the formal element; design, character, air, plan, and form itself—whether in the artist or in his work—derives from God. The role of the artist is to discover the form that the Lord has given to all His creatures and to embody it—by means of powers conferred by grace—in his product. While the artist is not free to express a nature other than his own, he is free to realize character by correspondence to grace. If he rejects grace—which is divine inspiration—he fails to attain individuality. The poet who writes merely in the “language of verse” produces a work whose quality is not affected by the nature of its maker. The translation is merely mechanical, for no individualizing form is called out from the materials; parts are simply put together with reference only to a convention. Parnassian, however, has some form in that the artist does mould his materials. But the form to which the Parnassian poet conforms is not real. He develops “mannerisms” that are affected extensions of his eccentricities but he does not attempt to realize his true character which would be devoid of personal peculiarities. Real form is a result of inspiration, of insight to which the poet conforms. Only in a moment of inspiration, derived from grace, can the artist realize character; otherwise, he must rely on his own personality which imposes a pseudo-form upon his materials. If the revelation is past but the poet continues to write, his verse becomes Parnassian, routine.²⁶ In each new work, materials are now assembled in the same way; the poem is not distinctive and individual—it is

²⁶“Great men, poets I mean, have each their own dialect as it were of Parnassian, formed generally as they go on writing, and at last,—this is the point to be marked,—they can see things in this Parnassian way and describe them in this Parnassian tongue, without further effort of inspiration.” *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

like every other work composed by the same personality.²⁷ But the artist of character, by his will to correspond to grace, does receive fresh inspiration for each work, and can thus mould his materials into a distinctive form. The "inscape" to be perceived is made by God; its artistic realization depends on Him.

To say, however, that each work of art should be "new" and that diction should be appropriate to subject is to state a position tenable by most critics. But Hopkins' method of determining this distinctiveness and appropriateness is peculiar to the schematism of his poetic theory as a whole, for, to him, these qualities are possible only in the work of a particular kind of person. In Hopkins' terms, no amount of training in versification, no accumulation of technical learning can make the great poet. It is the man who freely wills to correspond to God's grace that is capable of insight worthy of artistic transmission. It is this capacity that distinguishes character, and when Hopkins uses that term it refers to power of insight, the communication of which is dependent upon no ordinary powers but which relies upon the divine. Character, then, is to be discerned in "poetry proper." Hopkins explains the foundation for the outward manifestation of inner form when he writes:

It is certain that in nature, outward beauty is the proof of inward beauty. . . . Fineness, proportion of feature comes from a moulding force which succeeds in asserting itself over the resistance of cumbersome or restraining matter . . . and this moulding force, the life, is the form in the philosophic sense, and in man this is the soul.²⁸

Hopkins' analogy between nature and art clarifies the significance of this statement to his literary theory. In true creation, God makes not only form but matter so that a complete object is produced instantaneously. Man, on the contrary, must work with matter which is essentially unamenable because not made merely for his uses. He can, however, make a new whole out of originally disparate materials by his own activity; with God's assistance, he may succeed in realizing form in these materials. And because

²⁷"There is a higher sort of Parnassian which I call *Castalian* . . . it is too characteristic of the poet, too so-and-so-all-over-ish, to be quite inspiration." Thus a passage in Wordsworth is "rather too essentially Wordsworthian, too persistently his way of looking at things." *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 158-59. Cf. ". . . what I call inscape (the very soul of art) . . ." *Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*, ed. Claude Collier Abbott (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 135. Hereafter referred to as *Correspondence*.

Hopkins equates form with "life" or being, he may proceed to attribute individuality to it, for that which is actual is distinctive.²⁹

If then, a sensible object reflects the qualities of the force that gives it being, the work of art will have form and therefore distinctiveness in proportion to the fineness of the insight of the artist. The criteria of artist and work alike are formulated, by Hopkins, in terms of the seemingly contrary factors that characterize the actions and the works of the true Christian — conformity and individuality. This insistence on the quality of character results in a dichotomy of statements about the nature of art which when considered separately appear contradictory but which actually refer to the two qualities which together produce the highest kind of art. Thus, in writing of an artist, Hopkins speaks of Purcell's "distinctive quality in genius"³⁰ and simultaneously claims that "Purcell's music is none of your d—d subjective rot (so to speak)."³¹ Similarly, "inscape" is in art "species or individually-distinctive beauty of style"³² but not "individual style or manner."³³ "Distinctiveness" refers not to the kind of difference engendered by personality but rather to that deriving from conformity. Similarly, "species" is used in the sense of "sensuous presentation" or "image" of the true individual. But, subjectivity and mannerism relate only to the personal difference of the artist as man, which is only seemingly distinctive. The statements are consistent because the first type refers to reality, and the latter to appearance which may be deceiving.

From his concept of character, Hopkins derives more particularized criteria to be applied to the work of art itself. His reasons for objecting to the conventional and commonplace³⁴ are reasons

²⁹Duns Scotus argues that, analytically, we can distinguish individuality apart from existence. Existence is the ultimate act but is subsequent to other qualities, including individuality. Thus, whatever has being also has individuality. *Op. cit.*, Bk. II. dist.3, q.3, n.3.

³⁰*Letters*, p. 83.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 84.

³²*Further Letters*, p. 225.

³³*Letters*, p. 111.

³⁴"Their [the Lake Poets] keepings are their weak point, a sort of colourless, classical keepings; when Wordsworth wants to describe a city or a cloudscape which reminds him of a city it is in some ordinary rhetorical stage-effect of domes, palaces, and temples." *Correspondence*, p. 99. "I find in your poems, marked with character throughout and human nature and not 'arrangements in vowels sounds,' as Mallock says, very thinly costuming a strain of conventional passion, kept up by stimulants and crying always in a high head voice about flesh and flowers and democracy and damnation." *Letters*, pp. 72-73.

peculiar to his theory as a whole. Precision of detail in poetry is essential, because it reflects the artist's capacity for perceiving the relation between his object and the cause of its being. This perception would be one of "inscape" — the reflection of the qualities of the Creator in His creatures. Because God has given distinctiveness to each actual thing, the more individuality the artist sees in his object the greater is his perception of the reflection in it of God's power. But the artist's vision alone is insufficient unless it is communicable, and therefore the means by which subject matter is represented in the work of art becomes a point for discussion.³⁵ The artist's struggle to make matter amenable to his own uses is involved in Hopkins' seemingly simple statements about problems of execution for, as the artist realizes form in originally isolated materials, he makes of them one distinctive object in which material parts are no longer unrelated. As words are among the materials of the poet, they must be as specific and distinctive as the subject matter of his poems.³⁶ This precision, Hopkins claims, is dependent on the character of the artist for to describe an object precisely the poet must see its individuality. Lacking insight, he fails to perceive distinctiveness and he can represent only what he knows, which — in this case — can be a merely personal impression. Because the object of man's vision, the relation of God to His creatures, is an objective one, which exists whether the artist perceives it or not; the merely subjective passions of the man intervening between his subject matter and the manner of its representation in the work constitute an element detrimental to the highest poetry. Thus, one requisite of the artist's treatment of his materials is "naturalness."

Though many theorists would insist on this quality, the term has a specialized meaning for Hopkins. The combination of conformity and individuality in the attitude of the artist demand "naturalness" insofar as any affectation assumed by the artist indicates an intrusion of personality and will result in the kind

³⁵ "Now no one admires more keenly than I do the gifts that go into Burne Jones's works, the fine genius, the spirituality, the invention; but they leave me deeply dissatisfied as well. . . . It is their technical imperfection I cannot get over. . . . Now this is the artist's most essential quality, masterly execution. . . ." *Correspondence*, p. 133.

³⁶ "'Discuss'd' seems to me prosaic. The language of the line has an exact propriety, I know, but that is not enough; propriety of diction is the special excellence and attainment of rhetoric; poetry must have, down to its least separable part, an individualizing touch. . . ." *Further Letters*, p. 155.

of mannerism that distinguishes Parnassian.³⁷ This factor is reflected in a poem by the diction as well as by the calling out of distinctiveness in objects of thought and feeling. Hopkins often criticized his fellow poets for using unnecessary inversions, archaisms, and other affectations which, he felt, destroyed the impression of the earnestness of the artist.³⁸ Thus, diction in poetry (and the corresponding element in any art) is not a technique independent of the other factors involved in the artistic process. Only the poet whose character is adequate will possess a sufficiently keen perception of his subject matter that it can be expressed in precise terms.³⁹ The mannerisms that mark Parnassian derive from the poet, but individuality results from the perception of "inscape" in the object, and fidelity to that "inscape" produces naturalness. Expression that conforms to the object will not be affected by accidental peculiarities in the point of view held by the man who observes it; the real form exists, and it is the artist's duty to call it out. Thus, "naturalness" for Hopkins is relevant not to the artist as personality but to the agent whose mind is "a creature of God": the man who, by conforming to the model of his Creator, becomes himself an individual and a creator of distinctive works.

The criterion of naturalness Hopkins applies also to his prosody. In the preface to the manuscript of his poems he writes: "Sprung Rhythm is the most natural of things."⁴⁰ Here again naturalness is opposed to personal affectation and purely subjective mannerism

³⁷"This is in the main what is meant by artificial poetry; it is all Parnassian." *Further Letters*, p. 75.

³⁸"By the by, inversions—As you say, I do avoid them, because they weaken and because they destroy the earnestness or in-earnestness of the utterance." *Letters*, p. 89. "I must add there was another fault with *Ulysses* and it was to the same effect and same defect of unreality; I mean the archaism of the language. . . . It destroys earnest; we do not speak that way; therefore if a man speaks that way he is not serious. . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 218.

³⁹David Daiches has written that to Hopkins "the reality of the experience could only be adequately conveyed by the essential movement and pattern of the words, by the most scrupulously skilful disposition of language that would give the poem what he called 'inscape,' that inner unity and design which corresponds to the uniqueness, the actuality of the experience expressed." *Poetry and the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), p. 26. The statement might be qualified, for according to Hopkins, the attitude of the artist must be correct to be individual, and the skill with which he uses language depends upon his mental acuity; it is not a merely technical skill to be achieved by merely technical means. If the poet achieves "the actuality of the experience" his language will be appropriate but he must first be given the gift of character which will be reflected in the design of the poem; and his experience must be not only unique, it should be Catholic.

⁴⁰*Poems*, p. 5.

that obtrudes personality upon the poet's work. When he gives Robert Bridges his reasons for using sprung rhythm, Hopkins cites its naturalness.

Why do I employ sprung rhythm at all? Because it is the nearest to the rhythm of prose, that is the native and natural rhythm of speech, the least forced, the most rhetorical and emphatic of all possible rhythms, combining, as it seems to me, opposite, and one wd. think, incompatible excellences, markedness of rhythm—that is rhythm's self—and naturalness of expression.⁴¹

The standard of verse is thus defined in terms of its proximity to the rhythm of prose. Prose rhythm is "the least forced, the most rhetorical" because its lack of restrictions permit a maximum of variation, allowing the poet to place his stress where it is best suited to the bringing out of his meaning. But the prosody of verse differs from that of prose by the employment of metre which adds uniformity to the otherwise unburdened variety of prose rhythm.⁴² Hopkins' insistence on the use of metre derives from his postulation of the necessity of beauty to poetry.⁴³

It is significant that in an early essay, *On the Origin of a Beauty: A Platonic Dialogue*, Hopkins sets up the principles of beauty through a detailed analysis of a natural object, the chestnut-fan. The analysis leads to the formulation of a definition of beauty which "is not the excellence of any two things or more in themselves, but those two things as viewed by the light of each other . . .,"⁴⁴ and "beauty therefore is a relation, and the apprehension of it a comparison."⁴⁵ Once the principle has been established, it is applied to the various forms of artificial beauty: painting, music, and literature.⁴⁶ Thus, beauty, as it impresses the mind, has its origin in a perceivable relation between likeness and difference, and neither in isolation is beautiful or gives pleasure. Regularity, or equality of proportion, is prerequisite to any delight that may

⁴¹*Letters*, p. 46. Cf. ". . . sprung rhythm once you hear it, it is so eminently natural a thing and so effective a thing that if they [poets] had known of it they would have used it." *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁴²"The repetition of feet the same or mixed without regard to how long, is *rhythm*. *Metre* is the grouping of a *certain number* of feet. There is no metre in prose though there may be rhythm." *Note-Books*, p. 229.

⁴³" . . . in serious poetry the standard and aim is strict beauty and if the writer misses that his verse, whatever its incidental merits, is not strict or proper poetry. . . ." *Letters*, p. 133.

⁴⁴*Note-Books*, p. 64.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

⁴⁶"Rhythm therefore is likeness tempered with difference. . . . And the beauty of rhythm is traced to the same causes as that of the chestnut-fan. . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 74.

be obtained from the perception of variation. As this principle is not of man's invention but inheres in the beauty of natural objects, it is a natural principle.

Man, therefore, attempts to create beauty by embodying in his own product those qualities which give beauty to objects in nature. It is notable, however, that Hopkins distinguishes between beauty which is a "relation" and the apprehension of it which is a "comparison," for that relation is thus conceived as beautiful whether or not it is perceived by any audience. Furthermore, although the recognition of this principle is drawn by man from a contemplation of concrete objects, the law itself is independent of its embodiment in physical form; it is simply proved by its application to all kinds of beauty. Beauty is a universal in which particulars participate. Although the *Dialogue* is an early work⁴⁷ and rests on no explicitly theological premises, Hopkins' later dependence upon religious ideas in no way negates the principles previously set forth. What the more mature critic adds to these original concepts is the identification of the universal with its divine source, which consequently leads to the postulation of the necessity of grace for the creation of beauty in conformity to its idea.

To Hopkins who defined beauty in a religious context, the senses and mind of man are created by God in such a way that he is satisfied by proportion and disturbed by its absence,⁴⁸ and the principle which determines the effect of beauty is again a natural one; for it is not devised by man but is a consequence of human nature.⁴⁹ The Deity had a purpose and meaning when He made man sensitive to the effects of beauty. Therefore, man has been so made that he is capable of starting with the pleasures of sensory

⁴⁷It is dated May 12, 1865. *Note-Books*, p. xxiii.

⁴⁸Hopkins' predilection for the Petrarchian Sonnet form is defended in terms of its rhythmic proportions; it is divided unsymmetrically — into octet and sestet — and also symmetrically — in two line units. Also: "it pairs off even or symmetrical members with symmetrical (the quatrains) and uneven or unsymmetrical with uneven (the tercets). And even the rhymes, did time allow, I could shew are founded on a principle of nature and cannot be altered without loss of effect." *Correspondence*, p. 72.

⁴⁹Hopkins refers to Saint Augustine's work on prosody as supporting his own theories of the beauty of proportion. *Ibid.* He is also in agreement with the earlier writer on the appeal of this beauty to human nature. "When we seek things suitable for the way of our nature and reject things unsuitable we yet know are suitable to other living things, aren't we here too rejoicing in some law of equality when we recognize equals allotted in more subtle ways?" *Of Music*, vi. 13.

attraction and proceeding to those of the contemplation of God.⁵⁰ For this reason, the artist is expected to use all possible means for the creation of sensible beauty. His audience will then be led from a perception of artistically ordered relationships to the comprehension of the origin of their beauty; eternal and immutable laws that govern all God's creation. Thus, by producing a work of art, man fulfills what Hopkins considers the purpose of his being: the glorification of God;⁵¹ for a work of art, though concrete and mutable, is a reflection of the immutably divine laws of beauty.⁵² Because these laws are eternal — emanating from God and not subject to the personality of man — and because they are so constructed as to appeal to the nature of man, they are "natural." The great poet is capable of perceiving these laws and of constructing verse in conformity with them.

In applying this principle of beauty to the history of prosody, Hopkins can account for irregularities introduced into standard metres, which give a pleasing variety in verse,⁵³ and also for the repeated reversals in poetic feet, which make for the particular pleasure perceivable in counterpointed rhythm.⁵⁴ Because beauty

⁵⁰This is true of any kind of beauty that may be sensibly perceived by man. Hopkins writes of Keats: "Reason, thought, what he did not want to live by, would have asserted itself presently and perhaps have been as much more powerful than that of his contemporaries as his sensibility or impressionableness, by which he did want to live, was keener and richer than theirs." *Further Letters*, p. 238.

⁵¹*Note-Books*, p. 303.

⁵²"Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works (say of art) and glorify yr. Father in heaven (that is, acknowledge that they have an absolute excellence in them and are steps in a scale of infinite and inexhaustible excellence.)" *Letters*, p. 231.

⁵³"... the reversal of the first foot and of some middle foot after a strong pause is a thing so natural that our poets have generally done it, from Chaucer down, without remark and it commonly passes unnoticed and cannot be said to amount to a formal change of rhythm, but rather is that irregularity which all natural growth and motion shews." *Poems*, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁴Counterpoint occurs when the reversal is repeated in two feet running. *Poems*, p. 3. Hopkins uses twirls to mark these reversals in "God's Grandeur," MS.A.

The world is charged with the grandeur of God. . . .

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod. . . .

"Counterpoint . . . the musical analogy is absurd. . . . There can be nothing of the sort in verse, for only one voice and melody exists, and an attempt to 'mount' a second metre on the first would merely play havoc with its structure." D. S. MacColl, "Patmore and Hopkins: Sense and Nonsense in English Prosody," *London Mercury* xxxviii (July, 1938), 224. But Hopkins does not claim that both rhythms "exist" at once. He asserts that the superimposed rhythm is heard while the mind of the hearer "naturally supplies the natural or standard forgoing rhythm." *Poems*, p. 3.

is a relation between likeness and difference, traditional prosody was discovered to be inadequate by those poets able to discern its lack of variety. Sprung rhythm, therefore, is the "most natural of things," because it occurs in other forms of sound which please according to this natural principle — in common speech and written prose, for instance, when they do have rhythm,⁵⁵ and in that music which pleases because it is not monotonously regular. As he claims that sprung rhythm is natural, Hopkins must yet explain in just what way his prosody adheres to the laws for the construction and perception of beauty.

Hopkins first attributes great regularity to his prosodic system. Because each rhythmic unit should, for beauty, be in some way equal to others in the verse, he divides sprung rhythm so that the feet are all equally long or strong.⁵⁶ This is accomplished by having one stress make one foot⁵⁷ and by having each stress balanced by the same degree of slack so that the proportions of each foot are identical. It is this equality that makes the foot a unit. As long as the principle of equal strengths is retained, variation in the number of slack syllables in no way disrupts the agreement among the feet, as for each accent — and each accent is equal to any other — there is an equal amount of unaccentuation no matter

⁵⁵"Thus in his metres the stress is the foundation. . . . And since stress is the basis of common speech rhythm we may say that this sprung rhythm approximates to the rhythm of speech." C. Day-Lewis, *A Hope for Poetry* (New York: Random House, 1935), p. 172. The critic next finds an objection to sprung rhythm, because as Hopkins uses it "it does not conform closely enough to common speech rhythms." *Ibid.*, p. 173. But Hopkins need not be condemned for failing to follow his own precepts, for in his poems he uses not only rhythm but metre, and the latter immediately differentiates between common speech and the use of the same rhythm in verse.

⁵⁶"In Sprung Rhythm, as in logaoedic rhythm generally, the feet are assumed to be equally long or strong and their seeming inequality is made up by pause or stressing." *Poems*, p. 4. "A foot is two or more syllables, running to as many as four or five, grouped about one strong beat." *Note-Books*, p. 227. ". . . the beat is measured by stress or strength not number, so that one strong may be equal not only to two weak but to less or more." *Ibid.*, p. 235.

The following lines of "The Windhover" illustrate the use of a varying number of slack syllables as utilized in sprung rhythm. (I am using Gardner's collation of MSS. A and B, *op. cit.*, p. 99.)

High there, how he rúng upon the reín of a wímpling wíng
In his ecstacy! then off, off fórch on swing,
As a skáte's heel sweeps smóoth on a bów-bend: the húrl and glíding
Rebúffed the big wínd. My héart in híding
Stírred for a bírd, — the achíeve of, the mástery of the thíng!

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 3.

what the number of slack syllables.⁵⁸ The foot may have only one syllable, for then that syllable has not only the stress but also the slack that other syllables in the foot would have otherwise provided.⁵⁹ Because to stress a syllable is to bring out its nature by saying it louder and more clearly,⁶⁰ unaccented syllables tend to be slurred.⁶¹ Thus, Hopkins uses time-marking devices simply as a guide to accentuation. If the speaker dwells upon a syllable, he recites it more emphatically.⁶² If, on the contrary, he hurries over a number of syllables, he cannot stress them clearly.⁶³ Rests and dwells are often needed when monosyllabic feet occur; holding enforces emphasis and makes the one syllable equal in strength to other feet containing several syllables. Slurring is most frequently designated when a large number of slacks are contained in one foot; the unstressed syllables must be spoken the more lightly because all together they are equivalent in strength to one accent. Thus, as stress and slack are proportionately equivalent in each foot and as thesis and arsis are the same in each,⁶⁴ a suffi-

⁵⁸ "His failure to recognize the time-marking function of secondary stress led him into insuperable difficulties." Harold Whitehall, *Kenyon Critics*, p. 42. But sprung rhythm is based on accent and not time, "... it is a matter of accent only, like common rhythm, and not of quantity at all." *Correspondence*, p. 41. However, Hopkins did "recognize" secondary stress which, he claimed, when occurring in an emphatic position is given real stress. He notes of "The Raven" that all the beats are not actually equal, but few readers notice this absence of marking "so inevitably does the mind supply it." *Further Letters*, p. 180. Also "in Milton few lines have five real stresses, one or two being blank, though in idea there are always five." *Ibid*.

⁵⁹ *Correspondence*, p. 22. Thus, three one syllable feet are used in line thirteen of "Spring and Fall"—the first slack is carried over from the line before; in scanning, the stress comes on the first syllable of the foot.

"What | héart | héard of, | ghóst | gúessed."

⁶⁰ *Further Letters*, p. 179.

⁶¹ *Ibid*.

⁶² The circumflex and rest are used by Hopkins to mark syllables that are to be lengthened in recitation, as in M.S.A. of the "The Sea and the Skylark."

Left hand off land I hear [~] the lark ascend

With rash-fresh [~] more, repair [~] of skein and score.

⁶³ Long loops over words indicate hurrying; loops over syllables show that they are to be tied together. The first line of "Felix Randal" utilizes both marks, as shown in M.S. A.

Félix Rándal the fárrier, O he is déad then? my dúty [~] all énded.

⁶⁴ "Feet may be mixed but the beat must be commonly the same or nearly." *Note-Books*, p. 228. In mixed rhythm, "feet of the same kind may be used interchangeably, as iambs with anapests, because both belong to *rising rhythm*, or trochees with dactyles, because both belong to *falling rhythm*. *Correspondence*, p. 21. Augustine also argues that diverse rhythms may be joined as long as they agree with respect to arsis and thesis. *Of Music* iv. 8.

cient degree of likeness is achieved in the metre. Proper reading — and Hopkins provides his marks to indicate the correct mode of delivery — shows this equality.

Because verse is more regular than prose, means of variation are particularly necessary in this form of composition; for the more set the pattern of the structure the more need there is for devices of avoiding unpleasing sameness. It was this element of variety that Hopkins found too often lacking in the conventional English metres, and therefore, he enumerates various ways such as the caesura and tonic accent — by which monotony of rhythm may be prevented.^{64a} Sprung rhythm allows an unusual degree of variation because, as long as the poet maintains feet of equal strengths, the number of slack syllables within each foot need not be uniform. Strength or stress and not number is the determining factor, but variation in number may be effectively used to relieve severe regularity. As sprung rhythm has, therefore, great variety, counter-pointing is not needed and is actually hardly permissible, because the form is not sufficiently fixed that the listener can mentally supply it while hearing the variation.⁶⁵ But devices of variation other than counterpoint are used in sprung rhythm. Outrides — slack syllables added to a foot and not counted in the nominal scanning⁶⁶ — secure an effect of double rhythm similar to that of counterpoint but, as outrides do not affect a whole line but alter only a part of it, they do not unduly disturb the pattern of the metre. Alliteration and rhyme are fitting insofar as they contain elements both of likeness (in the sounds) and of difference (in the words).⁶⁷

Hopkins' definition of poetry, simple as it may appear, is the only one that could follow logically from the premises of his argument: "Poetry is speech framed for contemplation of the mind by way of hearing or speech framed to be heard for its own

^{64a}*Note-Books*, pp. 237-41.

⁶⁵*Correspondence*, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁶*Poems*, pp. 4-5. Outrides are marked in "Hurrahing in Harvest." MS. B.

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks arise

Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour. . . .

⁶⁷"Rhyming to the eye in no way helps the rhyme, rather the contrary, for there are two elements in the beauty rhyme has to the mind, the likeness or sameness of sound and the unlikeness or difference of meaning, and the last is lessened by any likeness the words may have beyond that of sound." *Note-Books*, pp. 245-46.

sake and interest even above its interest of meaning."⁶⁸ The definition is significant by its demarcation of the two aspects of this particular art: the sensory pattern, made up of the structural elements of rhythm, metre, and rhyme; and the thought content which is conveyed and enforced by these structural elements. Under the first head, Hopkins includes the various elements which, through a combination of repetition and variation, create for the audience the sensible impression of beauty. The rhythmic pattern must first be perceived by the hearer or he will receive no pleasure from the variation, for beauty consists in a relation between regularity and difference, and neither in itself pleases but results respectively in either monotony or lawlessness. Simultaneously, variety must be perceived along with the sameness of sound, and this too is achieved by the new prosody. By employing sprung rhythm, the poet enhances the interest of meaning in his verse. Sprung rhythm is remarkably flexible and permits the greatest forcefulness of expression.⁶⁹ As a set number of slack syllables are not demanded, the poet can restrict himself to using only those words that are essential to convey his meaning without adding superfluous ones merely to make his line conform to the conventional counted metre.⁷⁰ Fidelity to the "inscape" of the poet's object is possible because no artifices intrude upon the manner of expression.

The repetition of a stress pattern is most beautiful when the units themselves — the feet — contain elements of both likeness and difference; the beauty is itself "inscape."⁷¹ It conforms to the natural laws of beauty, which can be perceived and realized only by the man who is capable of insight. Fidelity to "inscape" of speech results in naturalness, a prosody devoid of personal affectation. The creation of interest of sound is dependent, there-

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁶⁹The principle of sprung rhythm is "a better and more natural principle than the ordinary system, much more flexible and capable of much greater effects." *Correspondence*, pp. 14-15.

⁷⁰"... for why, if it is forcible in prose to say 'lashed: rod,' am I obliged to weaken this in verse, which ought to be stronger, not weaker, into 'lashed birch-ród' or something?" *Letters*, p. 46.

⁷¹"Poetry is in fact speech only employed to carry the inscape of speech for the inscape's sake — and therefore the inscape must be dwelt on. Now if this can be done without repeating it *once* of the inscape will be enough for art and beauty and poetry but then at least the inscape must be understood as so standing by itself that it could be copied and repeated. If not/ repetition, *oftening, over-and-overing, aftering* of the inscape must take place in order to detach it to the mind." *Note-Books*, pp. 248-49.

fore, upon the same factors as those requisite for the establishment of interest of meaning. Because sensible form is an embodiment of inner form, it cannot be realized except through powers conferred by grace. Though analytically separable, the two kinds of interest do not exist in isolation. The aim of serious poetry is strict beauty, but Hopkins places the beauty of character above all other kinds, and this quality — while it may be sensibly represented — can be described in its reality only in moral terms.⁷² The character of the artist, as reflected in the work, is judged by standards that hold for values broader than purely artistic ones — they are standards that apply to the man as well as to the poet.⁷³ For Hopkins, the merits of poetry cannot be determined by standards applicable only to that art; its values are dependent upon and are judged by principles deriving from the conception of artistic production as an act that may be called "creation" only by analogy.

⁷²The qualities comprising Christ's beauty of character include tenderness, courage, and love of man. *Note-Books*, pp. 264-65.

⁷³"The only just judge, the only just literary critic is Christ, who prizes, is proud of, and admires, more than any man, more than the receiver himself can, the gifts of his own making." *Correspondence*, p. 8.

